

# Kentucky Marker Papers

## Primary – Grade 12

*~ without Annotations ~*



Kentucky Department  
of Education

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Gene Wilhoit, Commissioner  
Kentucky Department of Education

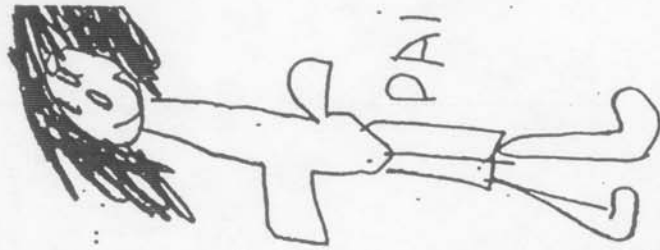
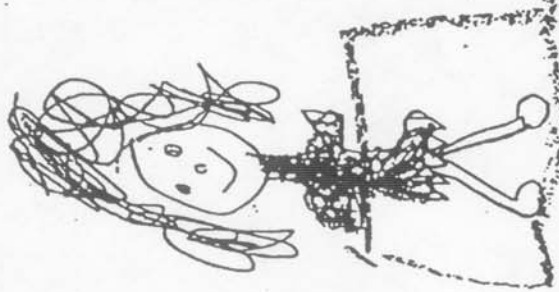
# MEMOIRS

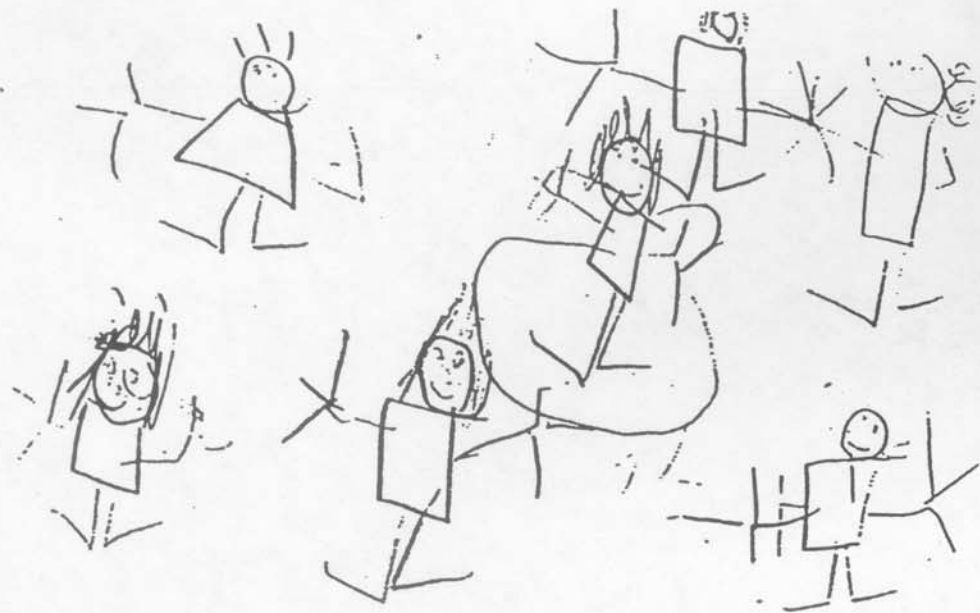


# My Family



# MAX FAMILY





IPIDY

NY FTV STFD  
ANML AJ Poon  
N B N B





I like

Suzanne

Suzanne is

Nice I like

her a lot

Nice is her





I have a lion. His name  
is slams. His very special  
he is soft. he makes have  
good dreams.

I feed Max dog food.

Max and I love.

I take Max to the pet store to take him a bath. Max bites a little bit. Max sleep in a cage.

Max dose not have a doghouse. I give him dog bones for Max to be good. We play with Max. Max chases a cat I tell him No says me

I Like Kyle.  
He is my best friend.  
He is in my class.

He is wise.  
He never gets me in  
trouble. And he never  
gets himself in trouble

~~We~~ We Likes  
the same food. He likes  
pizz, coke, and chips.

He plays  
With me at recess.  
We play foot ball.

A+  
school on fridays we play  
on the computers. And  
some times we go to  
cooking.

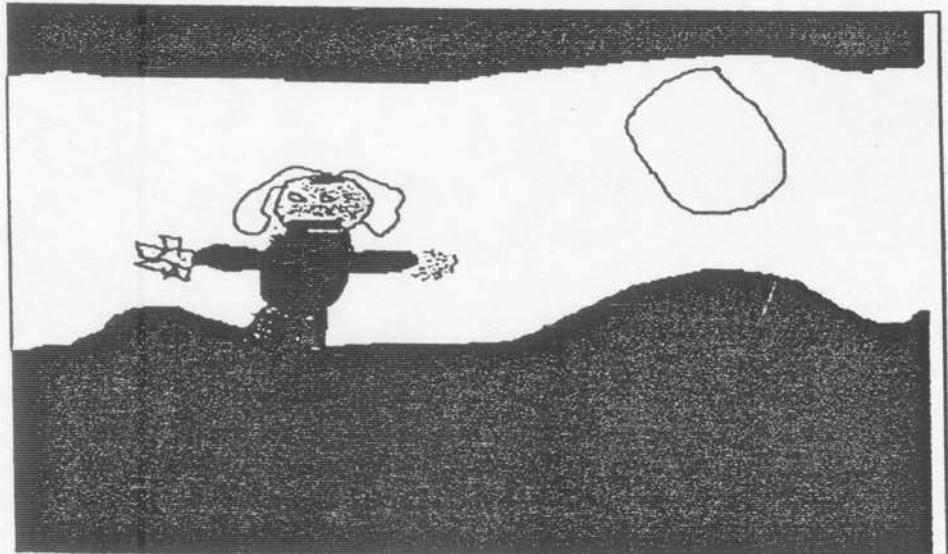
we both  
Like the rug rats. we  
both like the movie

## A Special Person

A special person in my life is my mom. She is special in my life because she helps me. She helps me when I'm sick. She gives me coke. She helps me with my home work when I'm having trouble like the time I couldn't find the ocean on a piece of paper, she helped me find it. My mom helps me calm down when I'm hyper like the time when we were at a pool and she said go down the water slid one more time then get in the hot tub then well leave. I didn't want to leave so she ordered me French fries to make it longer.

My mom is also special because she teaches me. She taught me how to ride my bike. My mom taught me how to do puzzles. My mom also taught me how to swim.

My mom is also special because she loves me. I now she loves me because she reeds to me, she feeds me, and she celebrates my birthday. My mom is the best to me.



Max Special Pension

My Special Person is my  
dad. I love to go fishing  
with my dad. Sometime we  
even go camping to. Last  
winter, my dad and I made  
an snowman together. I helped  
work on our house.

My dad and I go fishing at Lake Cumberland.

We buy our worms when we go fishing. Sometimes we go to Green River.

So sometimes we sit on the

bank and just wait for a  
fish to bite. Sometimes we  
cook together. We even sleep  
together.

My dad and I had a  
snowball fight. We slid down  
the hill. We even hide on  
the lawn mower in the winter.  
In some places we couldn't  
because the snow was too  
deep.

My dad and I built the  
back deck. I helped put up  
the guardrail. We also



built the front porch.

I love work with my  
dad. We have a good time

building.



A Very Sad Day  
One of the sadest days of my life  
was almost three years ago.  
February 8, 1996 my Uncle Dwight  
died. He had a terrible disease  
that made him sick.

He was a good friend as well as  
my uncle. Together we made  
cookies, played ball, took walks on  
grandpa's farm and just taked.  
Even though he lived in Columbus,  
he came to my soccer games. He went  
on vacation to the beach  
with him. He also took Kristen  
and me to the zoo, COST and kid  
zone.

Now that he is gone, all I have  
is my memories of the fun stuff  
we did. When I miss him a lot I  
read the poem "Miss Me But Let  
Me Go." It makes me cry and makes  
me feel better at the same time.

# MY GRANDMA

Who is sweet, kind, and loves me very much.  
Give up? My Grandma. My Grandma is angel with a halo over her head.

I can't say no if someone ask me to go to Grandma's house.

She always makes me my favorite dinner which is roast beef, macaroni and cheese, and tomatoes (with salt).

I can't forget the movie part, she always gets me a movie and sometimes they are so funny I fill up with laughter until I burst it all out.

Sometimes we go to Quincy and she gets me a coloring book, crayons, a notebook, and markers so new that you can still smell the fresh smell.

In the morning when the sun touches me with its light and I wake up we go get donut fresh from the bakery.

My mom and dad don't buy chocolate milk in cartons, my favorite thing to drink beside pop, because they say it cost too much money in cartons, but they're really only \$2.00 or \$3.00 dollars. So Grandma to the rescue again. She always gets me chocolate milk.

Another thing Grandma does is get good birthday presents. Since Kyle got \$20.00 from Grandma for his birthday. I'll probably get it too.

my Grandma is so sweet.  
She always has coke and chips at her house so when I go there she always gives me a coke.

My other favorite drink is fruit punch so she has like 5 bottles of that just for me. Sometimes I wish that I could just snap my fingers and be at Grandma's house.

At night when I'm in bed I think about what Grandma is doing. I wonder if she is in bed, watching T.V., or talking on the phone.

Whenever I'm at her house we always go eat pizza at O'rilios Pizza. It's so good it's almost as good as Grandma. They have a play place at the O'rilios pizza and there's a sign that says ages 3 to 10 only, so she stands out by the door and watches me.

I love my Grandma and nobody can change that.

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#### GRADE 4 - MEMOIR

### The Funniest Dog Ever

Hey, you animal lovers out there! What is black with tan legs and a tan face? When you make a balloon squeak this noisy animal cocks its head to listen? You couldn't have guessed it! It's my dog Bessi! My dog is the best dog in the whole universe.

The other day I went outside after getting all my homework done to ride my bike. One time before, I almost ran over my dog. I didn't want to do it again. This time she was in front of the garage. She wasn't anywhere near the bike. I realized she ran away, because she was scared of my bike. I just laughed at my silly dog. But I was glad she was so smart to move!

One time I was sitting in the swing, and my mom and dad were sitting there too. My dad scratched Bessi's ear,

and she showed her teeth. I laughed my head off. So my dad did it again. She did the same thing. I kept on doing it until my mom said, "It's time to go in." I wonder if she was wanting me to brush her teeth.

Just the other day while I was doing my homework, Bessi came upon the porch. My brother came in the kitchen at that time with a balloon. Mom extended out her hand, "Give me the balloon, Josh."

"OK," answered Josh. So mom got the balloon, blew it up and pulled the ends and made it squeak. Bessi cocked her head to listen. Mom did it again. I wonder if Bessi thought mom had another baby.

Another time, I remember Bessi was lying under the picnic table at Labor Day. We had people in our family coming over to eat with us. After we had cooked the fish we sit down to eat. I grabbed too many fries and two fell on the ground. She gobbled them up. She was waiting for more

food to fall but none fell. She always lies under the picnic table when we have a cookout. She probably thought, "Am I invisible?" Nobody was dropping their food, but she was too short to jump upon the picnic table to get the food.

By now you should agree with me that my dog makes me laugh, because I use to have a dog that would always run away, and I would never get to spend much time with him. But I have a great dog now that I can spend time with, and that makes me crack up!



## GRADE 5 - MEMOIR

### **My Special Friend**

When I was young around five years old, I had the most faithful friend that anyone could have. She was funny, playful, kind, and was always there for me. She is my best friend and no one can change that!

I'll never forget the day she came to my house to play. She did everything I did, and with pleasure. She would play hide and seek with me if no one else wanted to play with me. That was something that my old friends would never do.

She is short, has dark brown shinning eyes, and a lot of blond hair! Her shinning eyes and long hair will always comfort me when I have a bad dream. Once I dreamed that a monster was under my bed. My friend knew I was scared so she slept with me just so I would have a good nights sleep.

She's never complained about what we should do. When I want to have something to eat she will eat what ever I will eat, (even though she doesn't really like salad.) When we moved from Pennsylvania to Kentucky she even volunteered to come along. She made the 16 hour trip fun even though she got car sick on the Ninth hour! She still didn't fuss over it.

She is truly my best friend! She is always there in joy or tears. When my hamster, Summer, escaped from her cage, she helped me find her. When we found Summer she had died, but my best friend comforted me through my tears by standing near me.

My best friend is one of the family. She is so special to me that people say we're sisters so I even think we are. Her name is Dixie and she is a Golden Retriever dog. Even though she's a dog, she still means the world to me!



## GRADE 6 - MEMOIR

### **Her Loving Touch**

I popped every other berry in my mouth, that one Spring morning in                   , Kentucky. This was my favorite thing to do, picking raspberries in Mrs. Maizte's garden in the country. Mrs. Maizte was my first babysitter, but more like a grandmother to me. When every I dropped a berry, she laughed. When ever a red ant bit my ankle she wrapped it in a warm handkerchief, and just because of her loving touch I felt all better. Everyone she has ever met or ever will meet thinks she is a saint, along with me.

There are four things I will always remember about her. The cookies she makes for Christmas, the tea set in her kitchen (the one I used to play princess with), her hammock in her backyard, and of course.....her raspberry garden.

Now Mrs. Maizte is 74, her shoulders that I used to hug and still do are frail. Her muscles are tired and her skin is wrinkled, but inside she is as full of energy as she ever has been. She has lived through the Holocaust, many illnesses, and three generations, which she has taken great care of, and it amazes me how energetic she still is. Also I think it

is great how she keeps giving and giving and never asks for a thing in return.

Picking raspberries, playing with lizards, and putting on plays in her basement is fun, but the best part of visiting Mrs. Maizte's house is just being with her. I will always love her and when she is too old to care for herself I will take care of her, like she has taken care of me. I will pick her raspberries for her and put on funny plays to cheer her up in her basement.

Mrs. Maizte has touched my life in a way that no one else could or ever has in the past. When her heart stops and spirit fads in my heart she will still be the same. She has made me thankful for having such an easy life, from her stories of all the dreadful things that have happened to her. She has taught me "that if you judge another person from what you see on the outside, and do not try to look inside of them and find who they really are, then people may not think you are worth looking into beneath your skin, your soul."

All of her knowledge, I think has made me a stronger person, especially with people and understanding them. Even though she may not know what the latest fashion is or what's hot and what's not, I still think she is the most outstanding person around. Maybe in 50 years

someone will still be trying to keep up with the fashion, but knowledge will stick with you forever and it is way more important than the style.

My friends all say "she can't be as special as a *real* grandmother!" I just say, that in my mind and heart she is as real as any other grandmother. I know that blood-wise we are not related, but the heart is more important.

## GRADE 7 - MEMOIR

### BOB

He stood about eight inches tall. He was originally pink, but his color faded to a dingey beige from all the hugs and kisses I gave him, and from all the many adventures we had together. The color of his eyes never faded, though. They were as blue as the sea, and he had a tiny white nose and furry little ears that stood straight up in the air. He was a pink bunny whom I called Bob.

"I love you," I'd say as I held him close to my chest and gave him a big kiss. He would squeek whenever I squeezed his pink belly, which is probably what I remember most about him.

At night he would keep me company and protect me from the Boogey Man. I held him close to me so that nobody would dare take him away from me. He was so warm, cuddly, and soft! He was like a warm, furry puppy, but he smelled like he had been loved on, and possibly drooled on a little, too.

We had lots of adventures together on grandma and grandpa's swing in the backyard, but the one adventure that I remember most was the time we went to the grocery store with my mom.

We had already left the grocery store and were on our way back home in the car when I realized that Bob was missing. I began screaming and crying, "Bob! Mommy, I can't find Bob!" Mom reassured me that Bob was probably sitting on a shelf in the grocery exactly where I left him, but I was not convinced. Mom knew that she had no choice but to return to the store and try to find Bob.

Mom took me by the hand and led me to the manager's office where the lost and found was located. There sat Bob, acting as if nothing had happened, "Bob, don't wander away from me again," I scolded.

Nowadays Bob lives at my grandmother's house. His belly doesn't squeak anymore -- it sounds like you're squeezing an empty plastic ball when you hug him. His nose is almost worn off on the end. He's no longer pink and some of his fur is a little sticky on the ends. When I was about five years old I had many other toys, but Bob will always remain the toy I love the most.

## GRADE 8 - MEMOIR

### Typical Sisters

"Beep! Beep!" my play plastic cash register squealed as my sister pulled cans of green beans, corn, and everything else we took out of the kitchen cabinets over the scanner. When her five turns to be the "check out woman" as we referred to it was over, I would scream with delight, "It's my turn! It's my turn!"

With a disgusted, evil, like grin on her face she would reply, "I don't feel like playing anymore!" And as little kids do, I would run and get my mom. Mom would make her play until my turns were over and the whole time she would call me, "whinny baby!" or "tattle tail!"

We played many more games, such as dentist and house. Of course when we played house, guess who was the mom all of the time; Ashley, go figure! One time while we were playing house, she wrapped me up in a blue, white, and pink striped knit blanket and carried me around with a little bitty plastic baby bottle in my mouth. She sat me on the record player and said, "Don't move! I'll be right back!"

Being the naive little kid I was, I layed there, waiting. Every once in a while I'd raise up to see if she was coming. I had been abandoned! After laying there for awhile, I got up and started searching for her. When I found her, she was in the living room with Mom and Dad, watching TV. I confronted her in an impolite way, "Why didn't you come back!" I shouted.

Her simple reply was, "I forgot!" To this day, I still don't believe that she "forgot." My theory is, she got tired of playing and she accidentally-on-purpose left me lying there.

When I became a little older, and not so gullible, she couldn't trick me as easy, but she still got in a good laugh every once in a while. When I was



about five or six, one of my front top teeth was loose. My sister called me into her room and said, " Let's play dentist!" With me being the one with the loose tooth I was the patient. " You can surprise mom after I pull your tooth!" It took a little bribing before I said yes, but she knew exactly how to trick me so she could get her way. She quietly went and got a wet washcloth, trying to make the least amount of noise possible so it would be a secret. She came back and before I had enough time to change my mind about her crazy idea, she yanked on my tooth a couple of times and it came right out. When it had just about stopped bleeding, Mom hollered, " What do you girls want for lunch?" I ran into the kitchen and said, " Grilled cheese please!" putting the biggest grin on my face possible. Even though I liked Ashley's idea and surprising Mom, I didn't like the pain!

Now my sister is eighteen and I'm thirteen. It goes without saying that we don't play store or house anymore. I think our favorite thing to do together now is fight (when she isn't teasing me!). We can't agree on the simplest things anymore. Our time together went from all of the time, to a few hours in the afternoons, if we're lucky. What has happened to us? I guess we both grew up. The most drastic change in our relationship was when she was a freshmen in high school. She started liking Anthony

and can you believe it, she still does! The little extra time she has she spends it with him. I knew it was going to happen sooner or later, but it just happened so fast.

There are a few good things about our relationship such as, she helps me with my homework when I don't understand it, and she takes me places with her, even when her and " the brother I never asked for " (Anthony) as I refer to him go somewhere. This year on my mom and dad's anniversary, Ashley and I went to Taco John's in to eat. We stopped and

picked Anthony up at his house because he wanted to go with us. When we got there I moaned and groaned, " Now I have to get in the back!"

" No you don't," she replied in a spontaneous sort of way. " You can sit up front. It won't hurt him to sit in the back!"

" He'll pull me out of the car though!" I replied, getting ready to get in the backseat.

" No he won't. Just lock your door."

Satisfied, I sat back and locked my door. Her letting me sit up front made me feel privileged. " Ha! " I said when he climbed in the back seat.

I love my sister very much, and not just because she's my sister. She has been one of my role models since I've been able to walk and talk.

Now, after all this time has passed, I regret all of the arguments we had. I wish I could turn back time and do it all over again. The time flew by so fast. It seems just like yesterday that we were playing all of those games. What happened to those two little girls? But, it could be worse, and it probably will get worse, especially when she moves out. Hopefully, that's a long way away.



## My "Sister"

The swings sat side by side, one of our favorite places to play. We laughed as the wind blew our long hair back when we tried to see who could go the highest. At five years old we were the best of friends, who could swing forever and never tire of each other's company. When our bare feet finally hit the ground to stop us, it was only because one of our mothers had said it was time to come in. Then we took our time, digging in the dirt with our toes, and running zig-zags through the cool summer grass. Carmen and I were inseparable.

I remember Carmen as always being taller than me, though she was only of average height. Carmen's hair was long, dark, and beautiful. She was so proud of it that she usually let be natural, rarely feeling the need to run a brush through it. Her skin was the color of roasted almonds, and her eyes were as dark as night. Her nose, she always complained, was too big, but I know she would never really want to change it. Carmen held her lips tight to conceal her overbite, but I knew it was there and didn't care. Her giggling, shy and suppressed, was unforgettable. Her face told more than she knew it did; her eyes told her thoughts and she always got this shy smile on her round face when she was nervous. The clothes she wore were mostly hand-me-downs, faded and worn with age. This suited Carmen just fine. She was the kind of person who didn't really care how she looked or what people thought about her. She just enjoyed being herself.

On summer days when we were bored, we would sit in Carmen's room and try to think of something fun to do. Having our own grocery store was my idea, and Carmen was really enthusiastic about it, as she was about everything that was out of the ordinary. The two of us, sneaky thieves on a mission, waited until the coast was clear, then snuck down to her kitchen. We loaded our arms with as much as we could carry, taking foods like oranges and peanuts and other things that wouldn't spoil soon, and ran back up to her room. We sat the food on her dresser and proudly hung up a sign to show that our grocery store was open. Then we waited, giggling nervously

while we wondered who would find out first that the food was missing and come to buy it back. It was her pop, and he screamed, "Carmen!" when he found out about all of the food we had taken. He wanted us to give it back, but we explained to him that it didn't work that way. He would have to pay if he wanted the food back. After all, we were running a business. After several unsuccessful attempts at trying to steal the food back, her pop finally gave in. He would give us fifty cents if we returned all of the food. We agreed because we had had our fun.

Carmen and I rarely shared a dull moment. We were always going on adventures and playing games. We lived in our own world in which we, as sisters, could do anything we wanted. We loved to wrap up in blankets and sit beneath umbrellas on her front porch during thunderstorms. Even though we were both terrified, we enjoyed weathering the storm together. Afterwards, we would pack our bags and hike around the world, over the mountains in my yard and the prairies of her yard.

More than anything, Carmen taught me how to dream. As best friends we weathered many storms, and many times our only way to get away from our problems was to dream. I remember being at the park when she told me her parents were getting divorced. Instead of crying or worrying, we just spent all day playing alligator games, sliding down slides and swinging into the sky. Carmen showed me how to turn everything in life into an adventure. This ability helps me to be strong even under the most demanding circumstances.

I still see Carmen, maybe a few times a year, if I'm lucky. We have both moved away from the neighborhood where we first met and became friends. I've found that our friendship is still deeply rooted in the past and all the times we spent together because we don't see each other enough to base it on the present. We no longer share the secrets, stories, and summer days that we once did, but she will always be a part of my life. I spent so much of my life with her, and I know that because of that we will forever share a bond. Even though we aren't really best friends anymore, I still consider her my sister.

## Man of Life

"It's going to be okay, and after it's over your heart will be in perfect condition."

"I know, Kristen. I'll be as good as new in a few days."

"You just make sure to take care of yourself. I love you."

"I will, and I love you too."

This was the conversation I had with my grandpa a few days before he had open heart surgery. I wanted to be with him so bad, but I had school in Kentucky and he lived in Florida. My dad, aunts, and grandma were there by his side though, so I knew he was being well taken care of. I could tell over the phone that my grandpa was scared, but he was looking at the brightside and not losing hope. Without the surgery, he would have had a massive heart attack that would kill him. I was terrified, and couldn't stop crying. My grandpa had taught me so much, and the thought of losing him crushed me. It made me realize how much I would lose if I lost him.

There was so much joy, happiness, and love of life projecting from him. No one could ever be in a bad mood while he was around. There were many times I would travel with my grandparents who owned a Winnebago motorhome and were part of a club. My favorite part of these trips would be sitting in the passenger seat, while my grandpa was driving. He had amazing stories to tell about his adventures, and this was his favorite time to share them. One summer we were headed to Iowa for a club rally.

"Oh da do daaa de," my grandpa broke out in half hum, half song. It projected through the Winnebago, producing a sense of laughter and happiness I would never forget.

We turned to each other and smiled, my grandpa grinning with his eyes sparkling. "Ya know Kristen, I'm so glad I can show you the country; there is just so much you should do and experience. When we get to Iowa we are going to take a day to go to Minnesota to visit the Mall of America, the largest mall in the United States! I hear they even have an amusement park inside, not to mention restaurants like the Rain Forest Cafe, and hundreds of stores that carry things you could only imagine. How's that sound?"

My grandpa was like an excited little kid who couldn't wait to open his presents on Christmas morning. I readily agreed to his plans knowing that with him my experience at the mall would be anything but dull.

One of my grandfather's passions is being outdoors. Spending summers in Florida, I knew I could always find my grandpa working in his yard. He would plant palm trees, fruit trees, flowers, and bring life to them all, just like he did with people. He was constantly active, never wanting to waste a moment of the day, rising at about six in the morning, because life was too precious to him. I would go out and help him work, and he would teach me all I needed to know about the plants. We loved to pick oranges because that meant we could stop and savor some of the juicy fruit.

"Kristen, do you see all this brush? It has to be cleared out so that the palm and fruit trees have room to grow and breathe." We would work together to clear the brush

Although I was young, I wanted to take care of Mr. Price as my parents always took care of me. I had an idea of how he felt and it made me feel bigger to help him out. I had to lead him to his car and everywhere else except in his house. At Halloween, all of the kids who came to the door wore costumes. I told Mr. Price who they were and described the outfits they were wearing. I tried my best to describe them in detail so that Mr. Price could picture it in his mind. At times, I felt as if I were his eyes.

Mr. Price could no longer see well enough to drive his 1967 Mustang G.T. or his 1964 Ford Thunderbird, both of which were awesome cars. In fact, the time came when Mr. Price could no longer get his driver's license renewed and I overheard him telling Dad that he just felt useless now that he could no longer drive. I saw how Dad handled this difficult situation with Mr. Price. Dad loved cars as much as Mr. Price, so two or three times a week, he took him for a ride in one of Mr. Price's cars. I tagged along and got a kick out of helping to put gas in the car. During these mini "trips," I would describe to Mr. Price the places we passed and the scenery along the way. He loved to drive to Renfro Valley and listen to me tell him how the new buildings were coming along or how the old buildings were being remodeled. As Mr. Price's eyesight slipped away, the bond between us tightened.

Mr. Price's cars weren't the only things that he could no longer drive. He had been an engineer for 25 years with the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (L&N). The cataracts had begun developing during his 25<sup>th</sup> year with the railroad. He had surgery after surgery, saw many different optometrists and ophthalmologists, but none of them could do much to help him. In spite of the thick glasses the doctors prescribed for him, he was classified as legally blind and forced to retire by the railroad. Dad said that the

That was a major conversation for me. My grandpa made me realize that I can't listen to what other people think I can do, but to know for myself what I can. I told him that I really appreciated his support, and that it meant a lot. After the conversation we sat on a blanket in the sand to watch the fireworks. Together we marveled at the sight of the sky lighting up in brilliant color over the ocean. The fireworks were like a symbol of me finding myself and realizing I can do anything. I felt as though my spirit was rising to the sky and lighting up, just as the fireworks were doing. It was a special moment, one I was more than happy to share with my grandpa. Once the fireworks were over we decided to stop and get ice cream, each of us knowing how much the other loved it. The late night didn't seem to stop him, he believed life was too short to not get what you want.

After learning that my grandpa could have had a massive heart attack and had to have open heart surgery, I was devastated. I wouldn't know what to do without him. Losing him would mean losing a wonderful man who had taught me so much, and helped me to look inside myself to find who I really am. I really wouldn't know how to survive without knowing I didn't have him to encourage and teach me. I couldn't stop the tears even though I knew that he wanted me to be strong and have faith. I knew he was scared, and so was I, but regardless he stayed upbeat and didn't lose hope.

A few days after I received that horrible phone call, on the day my grandpa had his surgery, I received another. It was my aunt.

"Kristen, he did it! He made it through the surgery, and is doing just fine, but there is someone he really wants to talk to."



I heard the phone being passed and in a few moments I heard the weak but happy voice of a very special man. "I did it baby! My old heart didn't stop me, and now its working fine. Pretty soon I'll be up and at 'em, and ready to get back to having fun!"

"I know you will. I just know it!" I told him, and you know what? I was right.



## The Value of a Friendship

Growing up as the youngest child in my immediate family, and as one of twenty-five grandchildren, I quickly learned the value of relationships. With my parents, the relationship was often one of dependency and love, while with my brother, it ranged from playmate to adversary to best friend. My relationship with my parents and teachers involved rules (the dos and don'ts of life with others) as well as very direct instructions, training, and punishments. Although I was "told" many things as a child, I developed most of my values and habits through example. One of my first lessons in the value of friendship came through my parents and brother and a friend, Mr. Price.

My first memory of Mr. Price was when I was three years old. I recall his quiet voice, the smell of his cigarettes and pipe, and the touch of his hands which seemed like those of a giant compared to my own. He lived down by the county library in a little valley across the street from where my parents once lived. Mr. Price had become a friend with my parents several years before I was born. He and Dad shared a mutual admiration for cars – particularly Ford Mustangs. I don't remember this, of course, but Mr. Price met me as soon as I came home from the hospital. I was only one day old. He gave Mom a card that had \$5.00 in it to open a savings account so, "Someday he'll want to buy a Ford Mustang like my '67."

As I learned to walk and talk, Mr. Price was always at our house. Dad was rebuilding a 1966 Mustang and Mr. Price came over every day to supervise the work. I was generally out in the garage, too, and before long, we were best friends. I didn't know then that his wife had died when I was nine months old. His only child, a daughter, lived in another city, and my family, in a sense, adopted Mr. Price and he adopted us.

What I saw was an old man who enjoyed hanging around in the garage watching Dad work, an old man we took out to eat nearly every Friday night (all-you-can-eat catfish), and an old man who built a bicycle for my brother and a wagon for me. I saw my parents treat him respectfully. Mom would call and check on him or take him casseroles and desserts. Dad would pick him up and bring him to church on Sunday nights or take him to look at the new cars on the Ford car lots. Andy talked to him about Mrs. Price and I enjoyed riding in that wagon.

It had become a tradition that every year at Halloween, we (my brother and I) went to Mr. Price's house to pass out candy. A lot of people view Halloween as the devil's holiday but Mr. Price brought a lot of joy to it. He loved all the costumes and the little kids. He would set his L&N Railroad train lamp in the front window and the three of us would sit on the front porch and put candy into bags for all the trick-or-treaters.

I didn't know he had cataracts until we went to his house for Halloween when I was four. Dad knocked on the door and, instead of opening the door as most people would, Mr. Price called out, "Who is it?" My dad said, "It's Johnny and the boys." When we got in the house, I questioned Dad as to why Mr. Price had to ask who was at the door. "Why doesn't he just open the door and see who is there, Dad?" Dad explained that Mr. Price had cataracts, a thin piece of skin that grows over the eye and keeps you from seeing well. He told me that Mr. Price had them on both eyes and had had several surgeries to remove them but they kept growing back. His eyesight was rapidly deteriorating to where he could only see shadows and light and dark. That made me feel very sorry for him. I knew I would hate it if I couldn't see.

out of the yard to make it look better, and to keep his trees and plants healthy. He would be crushed if they weren't.

Once a snake came across our path, and I almost panicked, but my grandpa explained that the snake wouldn't hurt us.

I asked, "why don't you kill it, and then get rid of all the snakes?"

"Kristen having that snake around is a good thing. He won't hurt you, and he keeps away pests that will harm my plants. He and I have an understanding, I won't hurt him and he won't hurt me."

My grandpa had tamed it like a pet, and it kept rodents away. I was amazed he could actually tame a wild snake and enjoy its company. It goes to show my grandpa loved all aspects of life, and made something good of everything.

On the Fourth of July, my grandpa took me to see fireworks off the beach. We went before the sunset because to see the sun sink into the ocean is a beautiful sight. While waiting for the fireworks to begin my grandfather and I talked about the future.

"Kristen, have you decided what you want to do with the rest of your life?" He asked me.

"Well you know I love the ocean and its mysteries. I want to be a marine biologist, even though no one thinks I will move away from Kentucky to follow my dreams."

"Kristen, let me tell you something. Don't you ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something. I know that you can do whatever you put your mind to. You also know that your grandmother and I will support whatever you do. I want you to do what will make you happy, so don't let anyone talk you out of your dreams."

forced retirement was one of the first heart-breaking incidences in Mr. Price's life. The second was when his beloved wife and best friend died after a painful struggle with cancer, and the third was when he could no longer drive his cars.

Sometimes Mr. Price would be grumpy and pessimistic but my parents always told me to not get mad at him. They said that Mr. Price didn't mean to be hateful and that we should always try to help him in any way we could. They told me that God expected us to love our neighbors and to follow the Golden Rule. Without realizing it, I was learning how to be a friend.

When I was eight, Mr. Price passed away. I remember the funeral as if it were yesterday. We had been to Florida to spend Christmas with my grandparents and had called Mr. Price on Christmas morning to wish him a "Merry Christmas." Two days later, he was found dead. He was stretched out on his bed, resting peacefully.

At the funeral home, his daughter was crying uncontrollably. I couldn't imagine how she must have felt because I was so overwhelmed and she was much closer to him than I. Two men had to pull her away from the coffin.

When my family walked up to the coffin, Dad and Mom began talking to my brother and me about the good memories we had of Mr. Price and how thankful they were to have been his neighbors and friends. His railroad gloves were laying beside him, his glasses were sticking out of the top of his shirt pocket, and his old fishing hat was there, ready for him to put on before he went to visit. I asked Dad what made him die. Dad picked me up and said, "A broken heart, Josh. I think his heart was just broken too many times."

It's been nearly seven years now since Mr. Price died. I still love and miss him a lot. I will never forget him. He was one of the kindest men I have ever met and I am grateful that he was a part of my life. I spent a lot of time with him when I was a little boy and, at times, I wish he were still here so I could include him in my life as a teenager. I would love to have been his eyes at my baseball games or on Friday nights when the Rockets played football. Thanks to Mr. Price, though, I have learned to look at life not only with my eyes, but also with my heart. I have learned to value friendship because of Mr. Price.

## My First Life Line

Throughout my six years as an elementary school student, I was a helpless victim, drowning in a sea of stressful book reports and searching for a way to express myself in open-ended questions. As I entered middle school, however, a life preserver was thrown to me. From the moment it appeared, I held on tightly until my rescuer taught me to swim on my own.

Mrs. M. \_\_\_\_ M \_\_\_\_ was the high-ranking "officer" at \_\_\_\_ Middle School whose sole purpose was to whip her "gifted but undisciplined kids" into shape. I take that back. Introducing sixth-graders to ulcers was another likely item on her agenda. She had a natural march in her step, setting the admired and ideal pace for others to follow. Mrs. M \_\_\_\_ performed classroom procedures as though she had repeatedly practiced each one determined to achieve perfection. She was always neat and proper; never a single hair on her head nor a red pen on her desk out of place. The clarity of her voice demanded respect and attention, while her tone was often quite frightening. "My class will separate the men from the boys; the women from the girls; the writers from the dummies." Despite her intimidating features, I found myself admiring, even liking this drill sergeant. Her gleaming smile could provide warmth like rays of sunshine and was always accompanied by some explanatory hand motion. She rarely grinned without providing some sort of manual or verbal gesture. Mrs. M \_\_\_\_ was extremely blunt with her opinions – complimentary as well as critical ones. She was honest and truthful, with no strings attached. When asked for help, she would always respond, "I'd love to help you fix the mess you've created, so that someday, you might pass." Due to the biting honest quality of her critiques, I feared the day she would evaluate one of my papers in class.

Nervously awaiting the return of our first essays my heart thumped with anxiety. Suddenly, her piercing voice cracked my security shell that had hidden me for the past six years. "Well, I can see that there is some potential buried beneath all that mumbo-jumbo. The hard part



is just digging it out!" Confused, I searched for the correct response and answered, "Um, Mrs. M\_\_\_\_ I don't have a shovel to dig." Of course Mrs. M\_\_\_\_ replied, "That's quite all right. You can use your hands. Pick up that pencil and go to work." Until the bell rang, that day, I was lost in a maze of red ink. My goal was to distinguish between "mumbo-jumbo" writing and writing that, with editing, and more editing, might become worthy for Mrs. M\_\_\_\_, herself, to read. Overwhelmed with excitement, I was determined to receive a "well written" comment from Mrs. M\_\_\_\_ or at least a "not so mumbo-jumbo!" Sweat, tears, and a lack of sleep were all included in my "IMPRESS M\_\_\_\_ MISSION." Although I was unaware of it at the time, her lovingly-strict attitude and personality had already begun to inspire me.

Mrs. M\_\_\_\_'s sweet perfume danced happily through the air, luring me into her room the following day at school. Once again, we turned in our essays and awaited the dreaded comments. Her constant nail tapping was a tension building clock, a constant reminder of the doom that awaited us all. She always selected her "victims" for each new day, and then focused on her helpless "prey." With magnetic eyes, she would irresistibly and forcefully draw students' attention to her. With each point of her finger, I waited for her nail to lift me out of my chair and onto my feet. Eventually, it did. "Well, W\_\_\_\_," she always had to recognize the writer before the humiliation could begin, "I'm quite impressed. You read my 'red pen advice' and actually applied it when you rewrote this paper. I'm really impressed."

At that moment, Ernest Hemingway and Edgar Allen Poe were my equals. Even Shakespeare himself could not have put my sixth-grade essay to shame. Just because they had created several masterpieces did not mean they were "M\_\_\_\_ Approved." Whose essay had "impressed" Mrs. M\_\_\_\_? Mine!

I longed to rush across the room, wrap my arms around her, and burst into joyful tears. Did she realize what her words meant to me? I desperately wanted to embrace her. For the first time, someone had taken time to work with me, guide me, and have faith in me and my ability to write. She helped me find a writing style suitable and meaningful to me. If only she could

understand how I truly admired and viewed her as a "teacher," someone who earned and deserved that special title. Words of praise and gratitude filled my mind as I began to pour my heart out to this miraculous lady. Yet, as a lump rose in my throat, I simply muttered, "Thanks, Mrs. M\_\_\_\_." For the first time, without any words, gestures, or laughter, Mrs. M\_\_\_\_ just smiled.